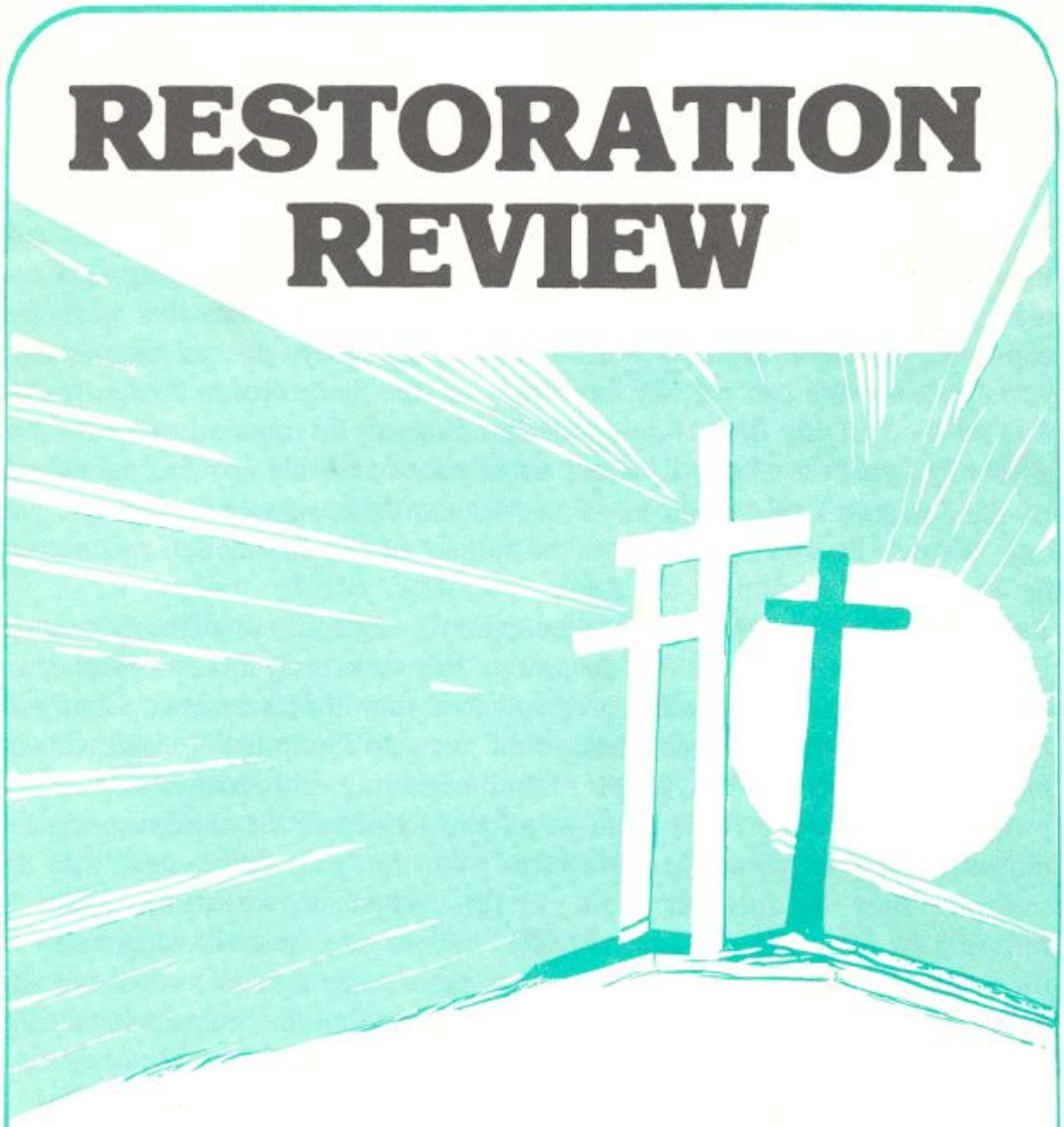
RESTORATION REVIEW



Many, if not most, of the divisions in Christendom result from deep insecurities in the minds of religious leaders. Insecure persons will be tempted to withdraw behind fences. . . Labels, which may have started out as honest definitions of theological distinctions, soon may become shields to support a collection of insecure, low self-esteeming people.

— *Robert H. Schuller*

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Jesus Today . . .

"IF YOU HAD KNOWN WHAT THIS MEANS"

We may suppose that Jesus studied the Scriptures at home and at the synagogue school like most other Jewish boys of his time. Lk. 2:52 says that he "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man." This does not indicate that he bore an omniscience that gave him command of all knowledge without having to study, not in his maturing years at least. We can see him pouring over the Scriptures in search for the will of God in his life. If an understanding of his mission came to him gradually, which is likely, it would be in relation to his growing knowledge of the Scriptures. He could have been called "the man of the Book," not only because he was as the Christ the subject of the Book, but also because he was an avid student of the Book.

There is ample evidence that he came to see himself in the Scriptures. He said to the Pharisees: "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness of me" (Jn. 5:39). Now and again he would turn to Scripture to authenticate his ministry, such as Lk. 24:27: "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." He frequently referred to what he was doing as "that the scripture may be fulfilled" (Jn. 13:18). When he withstood Satan by referring to Scripture ("It is written"), he was probably drawing upon his own arduous study of the word rather than supernatural knowledge. Yet we may conclude, since he was who he was, that he knew whatever he needed to know. But we must give proper place to the *humanity* of Jesus.

It is evident that our Lord was sensitive to a proper handling of Scripture. He saw that some "knew" the Scriptures without really understanding them: "Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God" (Mk. 12:25). This points up where our Lord considered being "wrong" as serious. It is very serious to twist the Scriptures, perhaps intentionally, and to neglect the power of God. There were other wrongs that Jesus did not come down so hard on, such as the woman taken in adultery. It is a painful study in contrasts to see what the modern church considers to be seriously wrong over against what Jesus saw as seriously wrong. Neglect is seriously wrong, Jesus taught, especially willful neglect, when it comes to the Bible and the power of God.

Do we neglect the Scriptures, and do we take pains to understand their meaning? And are we committed to plugging into the power of God?

Jesus is not saying that the church leaders of his time did not know what the Scriptures said, but that they did not *understand* them. Perhaps he was saying that they did not want to understand. He said to those leaders in Jerusalem: “How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not” (Mt. 23:37). *I would but you would not.* Has this not always been the story with God’s merciful overtures toward sinful man? Man is not only a fallen creature, but he is also rebellious toward any move to redeem him. Even the religious are not immune to man’s proclivity to presume that he does not need God.

As a student of the Scriptures Jesus probably had his favorite passages, just as we all have. Or to put it another way, there were certain truths in Holy Writ that came to be very meaningful to him, truths that the clergy of his day could not or would not see. His love for Hosea 6:6 is a case in point. When the Pharisees were critical of his fraternizing with tax collectors and sinners, he said to them: “Go and learn what this means,” and quoted Hosea: “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice” (Mt. 9:13). Jesus was not saying that they were not acquainted with this passage but that they did not know what it meant.

In urging them to go and learn the meaning of this truth, he was not telling them to look up Hosea 6:6 in a commentary or to inquire of some teacher of the law. They would learn its meaning by practicing the mercy that Hosea was referring to!

That Scripture in Hosea must have greatly impressed Jesus, for he uses it again when the Pharisees were scolding him for violating the Sabbath. “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,” Mt. 12:7 reads, and this time Jesus said to them: “If you had known what this means, you would not have condemned the guiltless.”

If you had known what this means. It is a gentle sort of rebuke, one with a touch of pathos. How sad it is that those who supposedly know the most about the Scriptures often know the least! The scribes and the Pharisees knew all about Hosea, of course, but still they missed the point. What God really wants is the heart, not so much the outward forms like sacrifice. He wants mercy, pity, and loving-kindness. This is the heart of religion, not ceremonials. If the Pharisees had known this they would not have been critical of what Jesus did. A perception of mercy can do wonders for one saddled with legalism.

We can all ask ourselves if the Lord’s judgment does not apply to us in the way we handle Scripture. Do we understand what the Bible is really saying to us? How often do we mouth verses that we treat only superficially? We might quote a verse to “prove a point” and yet miss the point that the Spirit intended. We can arrange verses so as to find “the pattern” we are looking for and yet miss the real model of Scripture. We can search out every verse, every line, and even every word, and still miss the wonderful Person of the Bible.

We repeat *Do this in memory of me* nearly every Sunday, and we carve it on our communion tables. We establish it as one of the five acts of worship and we emphasize that it is to be weekly. But do we really know what it means?

We preach *Except one be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God,* and we stress the external more than the internal. What do we really know about *spiritual* rebirth—being born from above?

The Churches of Christ salute you! This is not one of the weightier verses, but it does have some meaning. Do we use it the right way?

Whatsoever is not of faith is sin is a weighty truth, but does it really have anything to do with whether a church has a piano?

How can two walk together except they be agreed is the way the KJV renders Amos 3:3, and all these years we've made this mean that we have to see things eye-to-eye if there is to be fellowship.

Then there is an array of "put down" passages that are used to discredit various practices, such as "When that which is perfect is come that which is in part shall be done away." That takes care of the charismatics! Just as "We were buried with him by baptism into death" takes care of all those who were sprinkled. And of course "On the first day of the week" in 1 Cor. 16:2 proves that one is not to give anything on Thursday!

The Lord's gentle verdict, *If you had known what this means,* points to a crucial need that we have neglected: a responsible interpretation of Scripture. It is easy for us to view the Bible as the end rather than a means. The early church, under the guidance of the Spirit, produced Scripture because of what they had, fellowship with Christ. It was not the Scriptures that gave them what they had. So it must be with us. The imitation of Christ is the end. Scripture is a means to that end. We are not to control Scripture; it is to control us, conforming us more and more to the likeness of the Christ.

They tell the story on Paul Tillich, a very liberal theologian in his time, that a distraught man confronted him after one of his lectures, shaking his tightly-gripped Bible in Tillich's face and asking, "Is this the word of God?" Tillich responded with, "If it controls you like you control it, then to you it is indeed the word of God."

But *we* control the Bible when we make it mean what we want it to mean. We let it control us when we are willing to open our hearts and be taught by the Holy Spirit. Jesus wanted the Pharisees to see that their own Scriptures pointed to mercy, not to exactitudes about diet and Sabbaths.

Go and find out what this means, he told them. It would be unthinkable to some of us that Jesus might say the same thing to the church today. He was asking them to think and to act for themselves, not for a party. We are all badly in need of a fresh approach to Scripture: understanding what it means by really practicing it!

Blessed are the peacemakers, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are precious truths, but we make them ours only when we "Go and find out what this means. " We understand the Christian faith by doing it!

Once we understand the real meanings we will be less judgmental and less critical of others, and we will be more accepting. The Pharisees were "right" if one looks at it from where they sat—"in Moses' seat," as Jesus put it. Their seat was right but their heart was wrong!

We must take heed lest we make the same mistake.—*the Editor*

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SIGHT UNSEEN!

I am home for a few days between Washington State and Ohio (how gorgeous Washington is, both the climate and the people!) and am going through the mail. Ouida processes the mail, handling both subscriptions and book orders, and then saves for me what I need to see. I have just now responded to a letter from a dear sister in a distant state who serves on the staff of an "orthodox" Church of Christ, who revealed that she would probably be fired if they knew what she really believed, but that she goes right on praising the Lord anyhow. I wrote to her that our "underground of concerned ones" is larger than she might think and that she is by no means alone—and that down the road we will win!

I also told her that Ouida and I loved her and that we would take her, sight unseen! And that is right. Around our house we love a lot of people we have never seen. We fall in love with people by the way they write, sharing their concerns and expressing their love for Him whom we also love. We know the handwriting of a number of people we have never met, and some folk call often enough that we know their voices at once but they are still "unknown by face," as Paul once put it.

Sight is after all a rather strange commodity. Some blind folk get along beautifully without it, and many of them "see" some things better than the rest of us. The prophets spoke often of those who have eyes but cannot see, and our Lord dared to say that he carne to this world not only to give sight to the blind but that "those who see may become

blind." We don't like to think about having 20/20 vision and yet being blind, but one church in Holy Writ is described as "wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." This was the case when they supposed they were rich and had need of nothing. Lest we forget that it can also be true of churches today.

There can be comprehension (and of course *love*) without sight. My logic students in college were always troubled by this question: suppose one who has been blind all his life suddenly gains his sight; he comes into a room that he has only known by touch; he now sees such objects as a typewriter, a wastepaper basket, and his hat; can he distinguish between these objects only by sight, without again touching them? The students have difficulty accepting no as the answer, for they are certain that they could tell the difference between a hat and a typewriter. But they would be unable to do so if their only knowledge of those objects was by touch, not sight. The man would have the same difficulty distinguishing his wife from another woman (or even a man for that matter, or a horse!) without touching her. The man would know very well how a woman's nose or a horse's tail feels, but he would be unable to transfer that knowledge to sight without experience.

So the blind man who now sees might step up to the horse instead of his wife and say, "Oh, darling, I had no idea you would be so beautiful!" But he would know better, for good or ill, once he reached out and touched.

This is to say that while sight is precious it is not essential. We can understand without seeing, and we can live an abundant life without vision. We know that many do. And those of us who have sight see only a small portion of reality. I have more friends that I have not seen than I have seen. And those I do see I see only once in awhile. Most of the time they dwell only in my mind's eye. Moreover, I have many friends who lived and died before I was born, sisters and brothers whom I know from the pages of history and from their writings. I know their values and what they thought as well as if I had been with them personally. When, for example, I meet old Raccoon John Smith, it will be sort of "Of course, who else could it be? Hello, there, Raccoon!" And we will take up where we left off in the history books, without missing a lick. We will then have the advantage of "knowing fully," which of course has nothing to do with physical vision.

I have seen only a fraction of the Church of Christ on earth, which is made up of all tribes, nations, tongues, and peoples, as Rev. 7:9 assures us. But I dearly love those that I have not seen, and I rejoice that they are "out there" for Jesus, often suffering terrible deprivations for their faith. Unity and fellowship can be a reality even when they are there and I am here. It may be a limited fellowship but it can be nonetheless real. They can be in our hearts and in our prayers, and we can thank God that they are there and draw strength from their presence, even when we know we will never see them in this world.

This of course is the case with our Lord, "whom we love having never seen," as 1 Pet. 1:8 puts it. We accept him and love him and crown him as Lord in our hearts, sight unseen! It shows that sight is not all that big a deal. The God of heaven was pleased to expose the Christ to but a tiny minority of people in an obscure part of the world. Had he waited until now to have sent the Christ He could have exposed him to almost every person on earth through TV, and that almost instantly. But Malcolm Muggeridge assures us that God would never have used TV in such a way, and that even Jesus would not have used it had it been available in his day. For heaven's purposes the extravagances of man are unnecessary. God chose twelve eye witnesses for the most magnificent event of all history, and that was enough for those who want to "see."

The rich man in hell had concern for his brothers still on earth, for he urged Abraham to send Lazarus to warn them lest they too be lost. Abraham refused, explaining that they had Moses and the prophets to read, which is warning enough. But the rich man supposed if they could but *see* someone from the dead it would make a difference. Abraham did not agree: "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone were to rise from death." This says a great deal about the nature of testimony. Some make too much of seeing, whether it be God or ghosts, and not enough of written testimony, which is the basis of God's self-disclosure. *These are written that you might believe,* the apostles assure us. We need no more and we should not seek more.

Through the written word, and the Spirit's enlightenment that comes to us through that word, we come to know and to love Jesus. Peter assured the scattered and persecuted Christians that "you believe in him, although you do not now see him" (1 Pet. 1:8). "Seeing is believing" may be true with some things, but we can rejoice that we can believe in the Christ, yea, we can love and adore him, without seeing him. Peter was among the few in history to see Jesus in the flesh, but he would probably be the first to tell us that we can grow as close to Jesus as he did, sight unseen.

We might be tempted to suppose that it would make a big difference in our faith if we could have seen Jesus in the flesh like the apostles did. But the Scriptures make it clear that that is not only not necessary but not even important. Paul did see the Lord in some way, in a few fleeting moments, but there is no reason to suppose that it was in seeing Jesus that he came to love him so deeply. He loved Jesus because of who Jesus was. Seeing him was essential only to his apostleship.

This is to say that you and I can come to love Jesus and be as close to him as did the apostle John, who leaned on the Lord's breast and who had a special love for him. John's great love was not due merely to physical sight and contact. It was a matter of the heart,

and we must realize that there are no limits to which our love for the Lord can reach, sight unseen.

It says something for the Christian faith that much of our love is directed toward those we will never see in this world, whether it be the church universal or the world for which Christ died.—*the Editor*

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Travel Letter . . .

TWO CHURCHES IN HOUSTON

In Houston recently I was with brethren of two quite different Churches of Christ. The Main St. Church of Christ in South Houston is one of the more influential "non Sunday School" churches, and it should receive honorable mention on anybody's list. For more than two decades it has promoted missions in Malawi, Africa where there are now some 500 assemblies resulting from their efforts, which includes a Bible training program for native workers. The church also conducts a Bible Training Work in Houston, which is a principal training station for the leaders of this group of Churches of Christ. The staff, which includes G. B. Shelburne, Jr., and his son B. Shelburne, who spent nearly 20 years in the African mission, are well-qualified and deeply committed to their work.

The other church, with which I assembled on a Lord's day morning, is the Burke Rd. Church of Christ in Pasadena, for which I conducted a retreat two years ago. This church has long been an *avant garde* Church of Christ, one of the very first "liberal" churches, and has long been associated with its well-known minister, Wes Reagan, who recently defected to the Methodists. The church understands that its former minister no longer believes the basics of the Christian faith and now embraces humanism, which causes some of them to wonder if he ever really believed what he preached to them for so long. An experience like that can do a church a lot of harm, but we are persuaded the believers at Burke Rd. will overcome.

There is something special about these two churches: *they accept each other and have meaningful contacts despite their differences.* The South Houston church not only has no Sunday School but it does not allow the women to speak even in the Bible Training Work. It would be awkward to many of us to conduct a "class" in which some of the members are not allowed to take part in the discussions. But one needs to understand the theology, for from their point of view there are sound biblical reasons for this. As they see it, their Bible

Training Work is not a "class," but a called assembly of the church, as are all their gatherings, and therefore controlled by the injunctions of 1 Cor. 14, which says that a woman is not to speak "in church." The marvel of all this is that these brethren manage to circumvent any disadvantage this might be, and go on to do a good job of whatever they do. Oddly enough, as a group of churches I would name them to be the most "progressive" of any of the Churches of Christ, the main reason being that they have been able to change their thinking about fellowship. Even though they remain true to their convictions and practice, there is hardly a leader among them that will now make their unique practices a test of fellowship. This has opened up new worlds to them, both at home and on the mission field.

The Burke Rd. church, on the other hand (which is so "liberal" that it strains my own level of tolerance!), is the only Church of Christ that I know of with a female youth minister, who happens to be one of my favorite people. She and I taught a Sunday School class together the morning I met with them, and in the assembly she sang (very beautifully) a solo that gave honor to Christ. I also heard John Wright give a provocative sermon on *Blessed are the peacemakers,* in which he said to be makers of peace we might have to get ourselves hurt.

As I sat in the Burke Rd. assembly, I thought of the differences between it and the South Houston brethren I had been with the day before. And I rejoiced that they have a working relationship! Why can't it be so with all our churches? The South Houston folk do not have to endorse the class system or women ministers in order to accept the Burke Rd. people as their sisters and brothers in Christ and *work with them in areas where they agree.* And Burke Rd. can respect the consciences and good sense of their more conservative brethren and not look down their noses at them as fanatics.

And so we can have churches that are premillennial in their interpretation of prophecy and those who are not (which usually means they know nothing about prophecy!); those who support cooperative efforts like Herald of Truth and those that do not; those who elect to use instrumental music and those who do not; those who use only one container for the Supper and those who do not. And we can all be part of the Body of Christ upon earth, loving and accepting one another, not because we are precisely alike in every detail, but because we are *in Christ* together.

And in so doing we will be doing what the Bible teaches us to do: *Receive one another even as Christ has received you, to the glory of God* (Rom. 15:7).

I have not met the person yet who would say he was right about every thing when Christ accepted him. If Jesus accepted us, warts and all, why can't we accept each other even when we are wrong? When the Lord accepts us with all our errors, it does not mean

he approves of our wrongs. It only means his love for us transcends the wrong he sees. So it is to be with us. And when we accept each other on the same basis Christ receives us it will be to the glory of God. When we receive each other only on party terms it is to the glory of the party.—*the Editor*

RESTORATION PREACHERS ON BAPTISM AND REBAPTISM

Dallas Burdette

Few people today are aware of how or when the rediscovery of baptism for the remission of sins took place or on what positions the pioneers of the Movement took toward it. The general assumption seems to be that baptism for the remission of sins has been insisted upon from the beginning of the Restoration Movement. However, the historical facts speak otherwise.

In 1807, three years after "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery", Barton W. Stone's unsuccessful defense of infant sprinkling (to a colleague who seemed to be in danger of defecting to the Baptists) resulted in his acceptance of the immersion of believers as scriptural baptism. Only after Stone and his fellow Christian preachers had immersed one another did he conclude that baptism was for the remission of sins. Even then, his attempts to offer an invitation based on Acts 2:38 were not well received and he continued to use the "mourner's bench" system until at least 1825. Stone commented later concerning this period:

> The subject of baptism now engaged the attention of the people very generally. and some, with myself, began to conclude that it was ordained for the remission of sins. . . .Into the spirit of the doctrine I was never fully led, until it was revived by Brother Campbell, some years later. (*Biography*, 29-31)

Alexander Campbell was led to make a thorough investigation of the subject of infant baptism following the birth of his first child in 1812, some two and one-half years after Thomas Campbell had broken with Presbyterianism, formed the Christian Association of Washington, and published the "Declaration and Address." Campbell had the following to say concerning that June day when he and his father and five others were immersed as believers:

> I was immersed by a Regular Baptist, but not in a Regular Baptist way. I stipulated with Matthias Luce that I should be immersed on the profession of the one fact, or proposition, that Jesus was the Messiah the Son of God, when I solicited his attendance with me on that occasion. He replied that it was not usual for the Baptist to immerse simply on that profession; but that he believed it to be scriptural. Fearing, however, to be called to account for it by some of his brethren, he solicited the attendance of Henry Spears, a very worthy brother, for whose undissembled piety I always cherish the highest regard, to accompany him and to hear the half of the censure which might fall upon him for this great aberration from the good old Baptist way. Brother Spears accompanied him, and on this profession alone I was immersed; nor have I ever immersed any person but upon the same profession which I made myself. (*Mill. Harb.*, 1832, 319)

Neither Stone nor the Campbells were ever reimmersed after discovering that baptism was intended for the remission of sins. Robert Richardson, in his monumental biography of A. Campbell, mentioned other preachers who had not been baptized with the understanding that their baptism was for the remission of sins:

> Mr. Scott, Elder Bentley, and some others of the prominent preachers, were indeed aware that Mr. Campbell had spoken of it at the McCalla debate as a pledge of pardon, but in this point of view it was, as yet, contemplated only theoretically, none of them having so understood it when they were themselves baptized, and being yet unable properly and practically to realize or apprehend its importance in this respect. (Vol. 2, 207)

It was not until eleven years later that Campbell discovered the relation of baptism to remission of sins as he developed arguments against infant baptism in preparation for his debate with McCalla. But even four years after this he left it to Walter Scott to pioneer preaching of the doctrine and putting it into practice. Campbell, in his Extra on Remission of Sins in 1830, wrote:

> We can sympathize with those who have this doctrine in their own creeds unregarded, and unheeded in its import and utility; for we exhibited it fully in our debate with Mr. McCalla, 1823, without feeling its great importance, and without beginning to practice upon its tendencies for sometime afterwards. (*Mill. Harb.*, 1830, 50)

It was in 1827 that Walter Scott, having been hired by the Mahoning Baptist Association as its evangelist, first began preaching baptism for the remission of sins. Quoting Acts 2:38 as his proof, he had astounding success and baptized hundreds. Scott's teaching is a landmark, not because it was the first time this understanding of baptism had been set forth in the Restoration Movement, but because it marked the turning point in public teaching on the subject. Robert Richardson wrote:

> The people were filled with bewilderment at the strange truths brought to their ears, and now exemplified before their eyes in the baptism of a penitent for a purpose which now, on the 18th of November, 1827, for the first time since the primitive ages was fully and practically realized. *(Memoirs*, Vol 2, 212)

In his dialogue on reimmersion, Alexander Campbell addresses the following argument to a fictitious opponent who championed the rebaptism position.

> Why on all your definitions of the kingdom, supposing as you do, that he that is not formally and understandingly immersed for the remission of sins cannot enter into this kingdom of heaven; and it being a fact that before the year 1823, since the fifth century, baptism for the remission of sins was not preached, and not until the year 1827 were many immersed with this apprehension of the subject. The dilemma in which your assumption fairly places you is this—either the promise of God has failed, or such persons as were baptized as you were the first time, are in the kingdom. (*Mill. Harb.*, 1832, 121)

The rediscovery of remission of sins as part of the design of baptism was bound to lead, sooner or later, to someone's questioning whether baptism could be validly administered to a person who did not understand the purpose. Dr. John Thomas was apparently the first to emphasize rebaptizing those who did not understand "for remission of sins" at the time of their baptism. In the Millennial Harbinger of 1836, A. Campbell quoted from the *Religious Herald*, a journal hostile to the Restoration Movement, and eager to point out the difference of opinion between Campbell and Thomas on rebaptism:

> Progress of the Reformation — Re-baptizing — We understand that Mrs. Dr. Thomas was recently re-baptized for the remission of sins. Mrs. T. had previously been baptized on a profession of her faith, as we understand, by Mr. Burnet the Reformer. Recently her mind had become disquieted as to the validity of her baptism. Being confined to her room, and yet anxious to have the ordinance readministered, a bathing-tub was procured, carried into her room, filled with warm water, and Mrs. T. immersed for the remission of her

> sins, by Mr. Joseph Woodson, one of the members of Sycamore church. Mr. Campbell objects to this amendment of his new theory — but who shall decide when Doctors disagree? (*Mill. Harb*., 1836, 231)

In his Extra for December, 1837, Mr. Campbell spoke out against what he regarded as the schismatical drift of Dr. Thomas.

> His re-immersion for the Baptist, and his no prayer system of preaching the word together with his representing all those immersed among the Baptist as immersed antichrist, are strong indications of the schismatical drift of our Apostolic Advocate. (*Mill. Harb*., 1837, p. 387)

From the beginning the rebaptism issue grew into the third most significant controversy to plague the Church of Christ — after missionary societies and mechanical instruments of music. Austin McGary established the *Firm Foundation* in September, 1884, for the purpose of advocating rebaptism. David Lipscomb, editor of the Gospel Advocate, vigorously denied McGary's teaching on rebaptism. He contended that when a man believed in Jesus, repented of his sins, and was baptized in order to obey God, he was then a Christian. Lipscomb, answering a question on baptism, said:

> To take one truth or one motive out of a number given by God and say, "This one shall be understood, and the others need not be," is to do violence to the order of God, and is to crystallize a sect around a truth, wrested from its God given place, ignoring other truths just as important. This is to form a sect. (*Queries and Answers*, 66)

Lipscomb prodded McGary to deny that A. Campbell, Tolbert Fanning, and "That host of heroes" were Christians because they had not been baptized for the remission of sins. McGary boldly answered that if Campbell was not baptized for the remission of sins, his baptism was null and void. Undoubtedly he did not know that Campbell had not been baptized for the remission of sins, as he called him "brother." Tolbert Fanning did not advocate rebaptism, saying:

> We teach the Baptists the Christian religion and after understanding the great facts, if they are satisfied with their baptism, I know of no brother who would not fellowship them. (James R. Wilburn, *Hazard of the Die*, 70)

Lloyd Sears, in his biography of James A. Harding, describes one incident which should serve as a valuable practical example for brethren today:

> On the "rebaptism" issue, which was threatening to divide the church, J. D. Tant was invited to give a series of lectures opposing the views of Harding and Lipscomb. L. S. Chambers relates that he was surprised to see Harding, after a lecture, put his arm around Tant and walk with him across the campus to Harding's home for dinner. He learned to his astonishment and his great joy that "brethren could be brethren though they differed." (p. 146)

Obviously there are some instances when individuals should be reimmersed. If a person is lacking in either faith or repentance and receives baptism merely to follow the crowd, to get a handout from the church, to silence a nagging wife or husband, or to accomplish some other unworthy purpose, such a baptism could hardly be acceptable to God. Also, if a person receives baptism out of a sincere motive but has been given inadequate or false fundamental teaching concerning Jesus as the Son of God, as in the case of the disciples at Ephesus in Acts 19, his baptism is manifestly invalid. But if a person genuinely believes and repents, I do not believe that he is required to understand fully the efficacy of baptism in order to make it acceptable to God. If an individual is obedient to the gospel because of his or her faith in the Lord Jesus, that person's baptism is valid.

This is essentially the view held by Alexander Campbell as he emphatically points out what he believes are the disastrous consequences of any other view.

> Let me once more say, that the only thing which can justify reimmersion into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is a confession on the part of the candidate that he did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God—that he died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, at the time of his first immersion—that he now believes the testimony of the Apostles concerning him, and desires to be buried and rise with Christ in faith to a resurrection to eternal life. The instant that rebaptism is preached and practiced on any other ground than that now stated—such as deficient knowledge, weak faith, a change of views—then have we contradicted in some way and made void the word of the Lord — "He who will believe and be immersed shall be saved" — then have we abandoned the principles of the present reformation, instituted experience meetings, committees for examining candidates, changed the bond of union, and made something else than belief of the gospel facts the faith of the gospel. (*Mill. Harb*., 1836, 63)

The scriptural design of baptism is manifold; it is for salvation, for rebirth, for admission into a new relationship with God and his people, for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and for the remission of sins. Perfect understanding of the design(s) and their effects

are not essential in establishing the validity of baptism. The desire to obey God is the sufficient motive.—2428 Elsmead Dr., Montgomery, AL 36111

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MYTHS OF THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT (6)

W Carl Ketcherside

One of the most unscholarly bits of fiction current among preachers of "The Church of Christ" in our day, is that there is no difference between the gospel of Christ and the apostolic doctrine. This leads to a kind of reasoning which often borders on the ridiculous. And it crops up in the most unexpected places. Before me, as I write, lies a sermon outline of a fairly well-known preacher, a graduate of Abilene Christian University. He was attempting to prove that the term "perfect" in 1 Corinthians 13:10 referred to the completion of the sacred canon of the new covenant scriptures. This was his answer to those who believe in miraculous demonstrations and phenomena in our day. He said, "We must not forget that the gospel had not been completed yet."

Unless we want to be caught up in grave error we had better forget it. The gospel is the good news of what God has done for sinful man that man could not do for himself. It is the account of a person who emptied himself, took the form of a servant, and was born in the likeness of man. It is the story of one whom God made "our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification and redemption." Christ is the gospel, and the gospel is Christ. The news about Jesus is the good news. And it was fully, completely, and perfectly proclaimed upon the first Pentecost after His resurrection. It was perfectly accepted on that day also. Not another word has been added to the gospel since that day.

The gospel consists of facts about Jesus. There are seven of these. They are His life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, coronation and glorification. All these were made credible by acts of divine power which made them believable. The response to them is faith. Together they merge into the greatest proposition of truth ever to challenge finite minds—that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Anyone who heralds these facts has announced the gospel, anyone who accepts them without quibble has believed the gospel.

The gospel is God's message to the world. It is to be preached to all the world, to all nations. It was for those who were aliens. It was to enlist them as citizens. It was for enemies. It was to enroll them as friends of God. It was not for those who were disciples. It was to make disciples. Nowhere was the gospel ever preached to a congregation of saints.

They had already heard and accepted it. That's what made them saints. The gospel was the seed, or sperm, from which we were begotten (1 Peter 1:23). The doctrine is the bread upon which the children feed. Response to the gospel is a one-time experience. It is like begettal or conception. Obedience to the doctrine is a progressive situation. It lasts a lifetime and will be going on when death occurs.

Two centuries ago this seems to have been more clearly understood than it is now. Dr. George Campbell, of Aberdeen, wrote about it in his *Dissertations on the Gospels* in 1788. Dr. James Macknight wrote about it in his *Commentary on the Epistles* in 1795. Alexander Campbell saw the distinction between the gospel and doctrine and repeatedly stated it in his journals. Indeed, he said that until this difference was clearly understood there could never be a reformation worth the name. He knew that we could never unite all of the Christians on their varied opinions of the doctrine. Why, then, do preachers of our day scoff at the distinction, ridicule it, and often even label it as heresy?

With no intent of seeking to accuse unjustly, I would like to suggest that it is because they have something to defend. Let us face the fact. "The Church of Christ" has become a legalistic institution. In this they share honors with the Roman Catholic Church. The plain truth is that they believe in a humanly devised system of salvation by works. They actually make faith a work. And when one calls attention to the fact that "By grace are you saved through faith," they quickly, adroitly and cleverly manipulate the scriptures until they make the grace of God merely another way of saying we are saved by what we do, rather than by what is done for us or to us.

To justify such a "scheme of redemption" they must confuse gospel and doctrine. It is in response to the gospel we are saved. If the gospel includes everything in the new covenant scriptures, we must know it all and respond in obedience to it all, or be cast into the lake of fire. Such a written code of laws has no power to save if that result is achieved by acceptance of a person. Obedience grows out of such acceptance, rather than acceptance growing out of such obedience. Our lifestyle is changed because of a completely new relationship to one who knew no sin. It is love for Him that makes us want to imitate Him as our pattern. We are not saved because we work, we work because we are saved. This places the merit upon the atoning blood of one we love, rather than upon our deeds done by law.

It is not gaining recognition that counts. It is gaining Christ. "For his sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it all as mere garbage, so that I may gain Christ and be completely united with him. I no longer have a righteousness of my own, the kind that is gained by obeying the Law. I now have the righteousness that is given through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is based on faith." We must choose

between throwing everything away or keeping some of our antiques. We must realize that we cannot throw ourselves at his feet with our arms laden with garbage. We must early on determine whether we will be governed by the law of love or by our love of law. We cannot cling to both.

It is really sectarian pride, coupled with the tradition of the elders, which makes a people perpetuate an idea with no scriptural warrant. The basis of all sectarianism is fear. There never was a separate party erected except on that foundation, or motivated except by that feeling. We are frightened by the very thought of turning loose of a dogma which has become hallowed by long years. We are fearful of the consequences upon our partisan principles. But the real lover of truth will hold to nothing which does not commend itself to his integrity or veracity. In full dependence upon God, he cuts himself loose from all moorings contrived by man and sets himself free in Christ to be led of the Spirit. That is what faith and trust are all about.

One who has embraced Him whose person is “the way, the truth, and the life,” by that initial step makes a covenant that He will accept all truth as it becomes known and available unto him. The word of truth has been given by God, the truth of that word can be received with assurance. But the *truths* of that word are not all known to any of us. He who will be true to God will embrace each of them as he learns them. Before learning them he cannot be expected to do so. And even after learning them he must be given time to absorb and assimilate them. Involuntary ignorance may be a handicap, but it is no sin. Voluntary ignorance always is. What one could learn and refuses to will haunt him.

If the religious world can capture the concept of the gospel as the news about a person and see in that person the bridge between earth and heaven, there is hope in our generation for the beginning of that unity for which Jesus prayed. Our hope does not lie in our conformity to a code, our perception of precepts or in our loyalty to laws. It centers in our vital relationship to the Christ in whom all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell. It is in Him we live and move and have our being. Unlearned peasants, illiterate barbarians and ignorant tribesmen can, on this ground, be received. We can welcome them as brothers. They can never find their way if it requires a knowledge of all the subtleties of doctors of theology or the explanation of abstract doctrine by erudite professors of the schools. And in Christ there is “neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free man, but Christ is all, and in all.” Christ is all! Ponder that carefully.

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Highlights in Restoration History . . .

HE WAS ONCE LIKE THE INDIAN'S TREE

We all admire the person that can admit he was wrong. To be able to say *I goofed* not only blesses the *goofee* but the *goofer* as well. It is disarming when a great man, whom we presume to be beyond stooping, says that he blew it. This is especially the case with the great ones in religion, for those "who are somewhat" have a way of never being wrong. They are infallible or something akin to that. Even when they know they've erred, they seem to follow some such rule as *Never say that you were wrong,* as if it might hurt their credibility with their followers.

One might be surprised, therefore, to read the following from none other than Alexander Campbell himself:

"I was once so straight that, like the Indian's tree, I leaned a little the other way. I was so strict a Separatist that I would neither pray nor sing praises with anyone who was not as perfect as I supposed myself to be." *(Christian Baptist, 1826)*

He was referring to his years as an Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian, a sect that would not fellowship other Christians, not even other Presbyterians. While a student in Glasgow, Scotland he was influenced by some of the reformers of that country, and soon became intolerant of the sectarianism of his own church. When he walked out of a restricted communion service (without partaking), he took his first step away from his sectarian past.

So he went on to say: "In this most unpopular course I persisted until I discovered the mistake and saw that on the principle embraced in my conduct, there never could be a congregation or a church upon the earth."

How true! Those who cannot pray and sing with those "in error" but only with those who are "right" about everything will soon discover, if they are consistent, that they have no one to pray and sing with except themselves. And they will finally have to withdraw fellowship from themselves! Campbell is right in saying that there can never be a church founded on such an attitude. He concludes his statement with:

"This plan of making my own nest, and fluttering over my own brood; of building our own tent, and confining all goodness and grace to our noble selves and the 'elect few' who are like us, is the quintessence of sublimated pharisaism."

It isn't everyone that can confess to pharisaism, *sublimated* pharisaism at that. That is one reason why Campbell became a reformer. He could indulge in self-examination and self-criticism. He could be wrong! Reformations have to begin *within* those who would

lead them, those who will first reform their own lives. *Lord, reform your church, beginning with me* makes for a good prayer.

It is an easy thing to be a Pharisee. Religious pride is the worst of all pride. It is pride that causes us to flutter over our own brood and build our own tent, "confining all goodness and grace to our noble selves." We have made an art of trying to go to heaven on other people's sins.

It was a different Alexander Campbell who said to his opponent in the Campbell-Rice debate: "Our doctrine is catholic, very catholic. Not Roman catholic nor Greek Catholic, but simply catholic." He went on to speak of his people having a catholic creed, the confession that Jesus is the Son of God; a catholic name, Christian; a catholic baptism, immersion; a catholic Table, spread for all Christians.

When he was asked about opinions and differences, he said: "Where we cannot agree in opinion, we will agree to differ; and a free intercourse will do more to enlighten us and to reform all abuses than years of controversy and volumes of defamation."

How blessed it is that men can change their minds — and their hearts — and their lives.—*the Editor*

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BOOK NOTES

You might want to gradually build a set of commentaries on the entire Bible, a set that is informative and readable and not too technical, and *inexpensive,* as books go these days. We recommend *The New Century Bible Commentary,* published by Eerdmans, with 23 volumes (average about 400 pages each) already available. The writers are the outstanding conservative scholars of the world. You might want to start with *Job* (H. H. Rowley) at 7.95, or *Acts* (Wm. Neil) at 6.95, or *Romans* (Matthew Black) at 5.95, or *Revelation* (G. R. Beasley-Murray) at 7.95. You may add to your set at your pleasure.

All preachers and those who want to help preachers should look into *Between Two Worlds, The Art of Preaching in the 20th Century,* by John R. W. Stott, one of England's great preachers. The book is no ordinary treatment on preaching. 12.95 pp.

For 2.25 postpaid we will send you John R. W. Stott's grand little book, *Your Mind Matters*, which will delight you, and for 3.50 pp. his more substantial *Basic Christianity,* which has a treatment on the nature of sin.

Some of our readers have praised Francis Schaeffer's *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History* as an exciting study on the early part of the Bible, so we are restocking this book at 4.50 pp.

William Barclay's *Jesus As They Saw Him* is a 429-page study of the various titles given to Jesus, such as judge, lamb, scape-goat, messiah, prophet, savior, etc. It is a fine biblical study, enlightening. 6.50 pp.

Again we mention a book that deals with the question, "Why me, God?," which we all ask now and again. *A Loving God and a Suffering World* by JonTal Murphree takes a new look at an old problem. It tells you how to *use* suffering. 4.95 pp.

If you are planning to purchase a copy of *The Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, you better do so now, for it has a way of going out of print, and it is now available at only 19.95, two volumes in one, postpaid. It would be an ideal Christmas gift for a certain kind of person.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

I too lament the sad situation which necessitates this generation's best preachers no longer desiring and no longer welcome to work in the Church of Christ. The list grows. We kid ourselves if we think it will ever change. While we sit around waiting for that change, the Spirit passes us by and finds others more receptive and unencumbered by "our heritage." Thank God the Church of Christ is not His only option! or ours!—*Stan Harbour, Christ's Church, Roswell, NM.*

(The change *will* come, down the road. Reform must take place within, so those who will be used of the Lord to bring about the change will be committed to the task and will stay, even when it is difficult. Some will have to leave to serve God elsewhere, and we must love them no less and bid them God's speed. We have a great and noble heritage. The problem is that we have betrayed that heritage.—*Ed*.)

I read your article about the World's Fair, and I must say I thought you were overly critical of the way the (Church of Christ) display was run and especially the hand out materials. You seem to preach tolerance in so many of your articles, then you write so negatively about this work. You are *unfair.* We attended the Fair and were proud of what the church was doing. I don't usually write these kind of letters, but this article really made me *angry.* You may take our name off your mailing list.—*Wichita, KS.*

(Tolerance is not necessarily a Christian virtue, and so this journal makes no effort to be "tolerant." In fact we are very intolerant of some things, such as the party spirit, which Paul puts in the same category with the occult and idolatry (Gal. 5:20). But we do intend always to be fair. The person who wrote the above does not accuse me of distorting the facts or of stating untruths. I assume it is "fair" for the Church of Christ to criticize others but "unfair" when the Church of Christ is criticized. Did not the apostle say something like, *Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?—Ed.*)

"In opinions liberty" is one of the great watchwords of the Restoration movement. But among many in the churches of Christ there is precious little liberty, and less of charity. The climate in much of the brotherhood is totally hostile toward any truly objective study of the Scriptures, and any man who offers any new insights—anything which differs in any degree from "the old paths" of prevailing popular opinion—is immediately anathema.—*a Church of Christ minister to an editor*.

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

Joe Holley, an editor of the *Texas Observer,* had some things to say recently about his alma mater, Abilene Christian University. Returning with his wife to the campus for the first time in 15 years, they stepped into the student center only to be told in a loud female voice, "No shorts allowed." He reported that he and his wife laughed about the expulsion but that he was bitter. Realizing that one experience does not an essence make, he nonetheless saw such incidents as nourishing caricature, "and often enough," he added, "caricature is truth writ large." One is left to wonder if such rules have any real meaning, and, if so, if they should be imposed upon visitors to their embarrassment.

A Harvard professor, whom I know personally, has written a book on *The Mind of John Paul II,* in which he reveals that the pope once quarried in a mine. While the professor, George H. Williams, an expert in Polish history and fluent in the language, obviously admires his subject, he is disappointed with the pope's attitude toward

Protestants in the ecumenical movement. Seeing that the Protestants were tolerant of abortion, homosexuality, and violence (liberation theology), the pope was led to add ethics as a norm for intercommunion as well as doctrine. Should it not give Protestants something to think about when the pope hesitates to commune with us, not so much over doctrinal differences as moral imperatives?

The right-wing of the Churches of Christ is probably doing more critical thinking than the main-line. This quote from *The Persuader*, published by a "conservative" Church of Christ in Dallas, illustrates my point: "Baptism 'for the remission of sins' is not biblical. Such was never preached! Yet we do that very thing and then when our neighbors honestly perceive of our teaching 'water salvation' we resent it. Instead of resenting it we should tear up our legalistic outlines and preach it as the apostles did. It was always baptism in relationship to faith and repentance that was 'for the remission of sins.' That is as the principle of faith led sinners to the blood of Christ. *Every condition must relate directly to Christ and Him crucified."*

Dave Reagan sent me a copy of a letter signed by the elders of the First Christian Church in Mena, Arkansas and addressed to a dissenting group that left them sometime back. "We humbly ask your forgiveness for our failure to love you as we should and for our failure to maintain the bond of unity that should exist among true disciples of Jesus," they said to the dissenting group, and went on to say that an invitation for them to return was lovingly extended. "If you feel obligated to maintain your present course," they went on to say, "may love and cooperation between the two congregations grow to proportions fittingly honoring our Lord Jesus Christ."

We neglected to tell you of a glorious *faux paus* in the *Firm Foundation* last year, the June 12 issue. Dan Coker, missions teacher at ACU, wrote an article in which he offered to help congregations in "forming a missionary society." Before God, that is what it said! An Abilene professor helping congregations in starting a missionary society! That of course would not do, so in a subsequent issue there appeared a correction. It should have read "forming a missionary *strategy,"* not society. "The typesetter goofed," it said, and then added: "In this instance it made a whale of a difference, and we are sorry." I wonder if someone did not again goof, and if that should not have read: "In this instance it made a *wail* of a difference." Oh, well, it is too bad that we miss all these chances to laugh at ourselves and poke a little fun at our shallowness.

Dave Reagan postponed our trip to Israel until sometime next year, due mainly to the uneasiness of some over conditions in the Middle East. Let us know if you are interested in such a trip in 1983 and we will try to come up with the best date.

From our office alone in less than a year we have sold 812 copies of *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett, and over 2,000 copies total. The response thus far has exceeded our expectations. I intended it for the rank and file, not so much the scholars, and it is the rank and file that appreciates it. You can get your copy for 21.95 postpaid.

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